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Hal Lindsey and Biblical Prophecy and Is the Bible a Jigsaw Puzzle: An Evaluation of Hal Lindsey's Writings (Book Reviews)

John C. Vander Stelt
Dordt College

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bibliography, and thought-provoking indexes, the book has significant reference value and is an important contribution to mission history.

Hal Lindsey and Biblical Prophecy, by C. Vanderwaal (translated by Theodore Plantinga), St. Catharines, Ontario, Paideia Press, 1978, 139 pages, \$3.95;
Is the Bible a Jigsaw Puzzle. . . An Evaluation of Hal Lindsey's Writings, by T. Boersma (translated by Elizabeth Vanderkooy Roberts), St. Catharines, Ontario, Paideia Press, 1978, 251 pages, \$4.95. Reviewed by John C. Vander Stelt, Associate Professor of Theology and Philosophy.

In his *The Late Great Planet Earth* and *There's a New World Coming*, Hal Lindsey has concocted a pop-apocalypse which capitalizes on the spiritual uncertainties of our age and tries to interpret the Arab-Israeli and East-West conflicts by means of a divine time-table supposedly given in Biblical prophecy.

Vanderwaal describes how Lindsey, a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, presents a simplistic and misleading interpretation of both Scripture and history. Assuming the validity of Darbyist dispensationalism and of an exegetical (infallible) literalism, Lindsey thinks of all prophecy as prewritten history.

As a dispensationalist, Lindsey regards the church as only an interlude or intermezzo, Zionizes Christian hope (p. 32), and eschatologizes Judaism (p. 68). Vanderwaal shows how this erroneous theological stance has forced Lindsey to resort to acrobatic stunts in his exegesis of such crucial passages as Ezekiel 38 and 39, Daniel 9, Matthew 24, II Thessalonians 4, and the entire book of Revelation. Worst of all, with his peculiar way of reading Scripture and history, Lindsey has done grave injustice to the meaning of both, robbed Scripture of its covenantal normativity, and deprived God's people of genuine comfort for the present.

With a measure of vehemence and justifiable anger, Vanderwaal rejects this distorted interpretation of the Bible and history. Scripture, Vanderwaal counters, should be read covenantally. It does not provide us with a political almanac or a detailed time-table of events and exact description of wars. Rather, the Bible should be read and understood as the book of God's words of promise, command, and threat (p. 27).

Vanderwaal briefly discusses the nature and implications of understanding Scriptural

revelation covenantally in the last three chapters of his book (pp. 87-139). He suggests the novel and exciting idea that "Babylon" as used in the book of Revelation does not refer to the world but typifies "Jewish unfaithfulness to the covenant" (p. 84). This way of hearing God's Word in Scripture avoids the danger of reading the Bible as a quick recipe-book in the manner of "an old woman in a shawl who gazes into a crystal ball or who reads tea leaves" (p. 55), and it does not exploit the unhealthy spirit of enjoying "the apocalyptic land of terror and the unknown" (p. 13).

Whereas Vanderwaal's book is primarily an attack on Lindsey's views and only secondarily an exposition of an alternative way of listening to Biblical revelation and viewing history, Boersma's *Is the Bible a Jigsaw Puzzle. . .* is first of all a positive explanation of how to read certain passages of Scripture that deal with prophetic and eschatological matters, and only incidentally a critique of the exegetical acrobatics of Lindsey.

According to Boersma, Lindsey "lifts pieces from all parts of the Bible—a prophecy of Daniel, a prediction of Jesus, a section of Revelation—and forces them together" (p. 21). For Lindsey a prophet is not "a herald of God's Word" to strengthen God's people at the time and in the places they live; rather, he provides insight into the future and makes predictions on the basis of which the contemporary Christian can know God's time-table and, as a result, calculate the timing and sequence of future events.

Challenging this unbiblical view of prophecy and the resultant speculative theories of dispensationalism, Boersma discusses in detail the meaning of such things as "the seventy weeks" of Daniel 9, the millennium and beasts of Revelation, the role of Antiochus Epiphanes IV, the phrase "in the latter days," and the centrality of Christ and the Church rather than the Old Testament Israel.

The approach of Vanderwaal and Boersma to the Biblical meaning of covenant is basically the same. Both men have opened up new vistas which make it possible to read and be comforted by Scripture, to avoid a gnostic spiritualizing of created reality, and to shun the perils of speculating about the future after trying to pry into God's time-chart.

Both books are indispensable for preachers, elders, Bible discussion group leaders, and teachers of Bible and theology. We commend the Paideia Press for having made these two publications available for the sole purpose of strengthening the faith and power of God's people who live in an age and culture which is made more complex and confusing by the sensational yet unbiblical views of such propagandists as Hal Lindsey.